

Global Education in the Shifting Classroom:  
Refocusing the Teacher Lens Through Study Abroad

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## **Abstract**

Academic exchange programmes provide opportunities for teacher candidates to study at educational institutions abroad wherein they are able to learn more about different cultures, teaching practices, and build cross-cultural relationships. This paper is an exploration into my teacher candidate experience abroad. The relevant research on this topic indicates that teacher certification should take an active role in creating opportunities for teacher candidates to participate in educational experiences abroad because of their benefits. The knowledge that a teacher gains through abroad experiences is one of the strongest factors in helping to build authentic global classrooms. In addition, these programmes allow for fuller understanding of a global context and the chance to understand someone else's story. This review and synthesis of literature and research findings prepares a foundation for how teacher candidates, and hopefully, how policy makers can work toward creating a more inclusive global classroom for students.

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

Several approaches to education have been explored in an attempt to solve the question of how to create equal and meaningful educational experiences for all students as might be provided by individual teachers and, on a broader level, communities at large. Global education has the potential to answer the how by transforming classrooms and helping to foster a more positive learning environment through addressing each student and his or her respective needs. Global education exposes students to a world that is not only local, but also encourages exploration beyond what students know at “home” and helps them to look more critically at “the rest of the world.” Global education in schools supports students with the hope of preparing them for life at home, in communities, and abroad. Scheunpflug and Asbrand (2006) further describe global education as an educational field which provides a

pedagogical reaction to the developmental state of world society working within the normative premise of overcoming inequality by being orientated towards a model of global justice...[and that] the aim of global education is to support the learners’ development in terms of acquiring adequate competencies for life in a world society. (p. 35)

In recent years, The Ontario Ministry of Education (1993) has reported growth in racial and cultural diversity. Thus, in a world that is radically changing, the role of global education becomes critically important in schools.

### **Background**

The world is increasingly globalised. Every year, students from all parts of the world are entering Canadian classrooms and the number continues to grow (Citizenship

and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2011). There is a need to prepare students of all sociocultural backgrounds to engage with the global world. Schools are often the place where students spend the majority of their days, so understandably, the pressure is felt by teachers and schools to internationalise and engage in global discussions. Global education seeks to address demographic changes in Canadian classrooms, specifically an upward trend in the numbers of immigrant students from all over the world. Since the 1950s, Canada has seen an entrance of immigrants from Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Uganda, Chile, Indochina, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos and, more recently, from Mexico and Haiti (CIC, 2011, p. 2). By promoting the understanding of people of different cultural backgrounds, teachers can help to increase acceptance about and between these groups through continued communication and cooperation.

However, the issue of ignorance arises when school boards, schools, and teachers struggle with the notion of developing global education because of their own, often, limited experiences, thus affecting what kind education is currently offered to students by use of various curricula or implementation of school policies. For instance, the Ministry of Education's (1993) mandated document, *Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards* (1993) provides guidelines for policy development and implementation of policy in Ontario schools. This article, along with other existing research, will be discussed throughout this major research paper with the prospect of providing further clarification on the global climate of Ontario schools. Much of the literature surrounding culture and communication operates on the premise that "to communicate with someone who is foreign or different, we must first understand the details or stereotype [sic] of their culture" (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2004, p. 5). Therefore, it is necessary to provide

global exposure for teachers and their professional practice.

Teacher candidates' experiences abroad are one step toward applying global education within the classroom. When discussing the role of global education within the classroom, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC, 2007) recognises that a teacher's knowledge, experience, and exposure to educational experiences in another area of the world can drastically change the importance of applying global education within the classroom context. Consequently, academic institutions should not only seek education at "home", but also use study abroad programmes as an important internationalisation strategy (Döring et al., 2010). When referring to classroom in the "home" context, I am referring to elementary schooling in a public Canadian school setting. Before entering any setting, especially a classroom or study abroad programme, teachers must tackle their "possessive investment in Whiteness" (Renner, Brown, Stiens, & Burton, 2010, p. 49). I feel it is critical, at this point, to recognise myself as a White female from a middle-class family who has had the opportunity to acquire a postsecondary education. I also recognise that I am writing this paper understanding that Whiteness—and the associated power and privilege (even if unintentional)—affects others.

Study abroad programmes are not limited to teacher candidates. Teachers who want to expand their global focus later in their careers should be able to do so. In fact, Coryell (2011), Orndorff (1998), and Jung and Caffarella (2010) discuss the transformative changes in self-awareness, intercultural understanding, cultural experiences, and development of adult learners through their study abroad experiences. The focus of this major research paper, however, will remain on teacher candidate



education because new teachers can help to initiate change from the outset to better reflect growing classroom diversity through improved teaching practices.

### **Research Problem**

The problem arises in that the “theoretical underpinnings and philosophical foundations of an evolved intercultural education” (Renner et al., 2010, p. 41) do not reflect the change in diversifying classrooms. In other words, the need to communicate with people of other cultures has not been reflected as much as it could be in classroom teaching. Renner et al. (2010) explore how an international lens can facilitate teachers in increasing this communication by helping them “to identify more clearly and understand the sociopolitical contexts” (p. 41) of the classroom and address these contexts accordingly. The lack of response to shifting classrooms often results in ignorance of other cultures. Schools need to address the increase of multicultural students in the classroom, resulting in a more comfortable environment for students and teachers and a greater level of understanding shared in the school community at large (AUCC, 2007). There are multiple factors that attribute to a lack of enthusiasm regarding global education. For instance, after a review of the literature for research on study abroad programmes, little has been found using descriptors such as the term “transculturation”. I find this word relevant because it tries to bridge the gap in perspectives between Western students exploring Eastern notions of education, while, on the other hand, as Managthunga (2007) discusses, it also encompasses moments of creativity when “culturally diverse students may carefully select...parts of Western knowledge that they find useful and seek to blend them with their own knowledge and ways of thinking’ (pp. 97-98). Unfortunately, the term appeared minimally within searches. Along with

“transculturation,” there was a need to use numerous words to narrow down the search: “global education,” “study abroad,” and “teacher.” Each of these keywords was searched in different combinations; however, even after doing so, only limited results surfaced regarding research on teacher education programmes that are partnered with study abroad programmes and their potential to influence prospective teachers in utilising global education in the classroom. Teachers and students, or more generally, anyone interested in learning how to respond to the rapidly burgeoning multicultural classrooms can gain a wealth of knowledge through study abroad programmes. For teachers especially, these abroad opportunities allow them to globalise their scope by increasing exposure to multiple facets of social, academic, and cultural life in other parts of the world. Without moving too deeply into framework and constructs that are meant to comprise global education, skimming the surface facts already indicates that larger problems exist. For instance, Cossolotto (2009) speaks to the idea that, quite often, there is a lot of talk surrounding deficits. The “Global Awareness Deficit,” (p. 564) as he refers to it, is disregarded as insignificant. In a 2002 survey, 30 percent of students could barely locate the Pacific Ocean on a map and, not so surprisingly, four years later, only a handful of young adults thought speaking another language was important (Cossolotto, 2009, p. 567). As someone who is passionate about language, linguistics, and travel, it is almost hard to believe this is true. It cannot be. There is a clear need to (re)focus the intercultural lens. By introducing global education into their own lives, educators are able to examine the historical and sociological backdrops that create individual circumstances that meld together in a global context (Renner et al., 2010). It is only through this recognition that teachers are able to reflect those changes within the

classrooms. The hope of encouraging teacher educational experiences abroad allows teacher candidates (and eventually practicing teachers) to use their international experiences to help diminish the “Global Awareness Deficit.”

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this investigation is to explore research surrounding global education and study abroad experiences. In addition to literature-based research, my personal narrative reflections are also used in congruence with the literature review to investigate my own experiences abroad. The particular study abroad opportunity I took advantage allowed me to refocus my own lens, expand my perceptions of global education, and reanalyse how I might approach the application of global education in the classroom. The purpose of this study is to show the potential benefits of taking advantage of study abroad programmes during or upon completion of a teacher certification program, whereby teachers are able to glean insight into other cultures (AUCC, 2007; CIGE, 2012). Hepple (2012) says that experiencing these different discourses firsthand in the transnational classroom can “extend participants’ professional understandings, unsettling their taken-for-granted assumptions about teacher and pupil roles, and the nature of the teaching and learning process” (p. 319). The exploration I undertake in this paper will, hopefully, validate the importance of expanding beyond buzzwords and delving into the real issues that surround real students for teacher education programmes and policy makers. For clarification, Edelsky and Cherland (2006) observe that buzzwords lack precise meaning and are simply “currently popular term[s] or slogan[s]” (p. 18). Teachers, then, must keep this notion of “buzzwords” at the forefront of their minds because in doing so, they are able to move beyond those words

toward real and substantive understanding and application of global education. My hope is this major research paper allows teacher candidates and educators to explore the benefits of global education and study abroad programmes at the same time.

### **Study Approach**

The research began with a belief that teacher experiences abroad play an important role in viewing the implementation of global education within their own classrooms as critical. This research expands across a breadth of studies, ranging from qualitative data analysis, inclusive of narrative research, self-study, and personal experience. Most sources were found through Academic Search Premier and Education Research Complete. The sources found firsthand are published in peer-reviewed journals, books, government documents, and existing legislation. The validation of other sources comes because they were taken from the sources that were published in other peer-reviewed journals. Research in global education, though growing, is still in the beginning stages. Without many studies done specifically focusing on global education, the literature explored is an amalgam of integrated searches that are consistent with the knowledge and the attitudes connected to living in a culturally diverse and globally interrelated world. Though looking at studies dealing solely with global education would have been desirable, the lack of research material with this focus would have hindered the research process, thus stressing the need for continuing research in the field.

The majority of my research is explored as a self-study and includes an incorporated reflection portion of the literature review. Finding value in my own experience supported the belief that by using reflexive practice, in particular during study abroad programmes, I will ultimately improve my own practice as a teacher. Samras and

Freese (2006) note that reflection “benefits the larger broader purpose of the advancement of knowledge about teaching and the educational system” (p.14). The use of my reflections helps bring a personal connection by integrating my personal experience and thoughts to existing literature. Through my narrative, I was able to expand the discussion around how the journey of my personal experiences shows the effectiveness of the study abroad programme in which I participated by including a wide array of personal and professional experiences (Lassonde, Galman, & Kosnik, 2009). A narrative study in its own right can be defined in multiple capacities, but my particular focus is defined by situated practice. Pinnegar (1998) suggests that this type of self-study allows graduate students, teachers, and school-district personnel to study professional practice. Clarke and Erickson (2004) claim, “for teaching to occur, there must be...a way for an educator to know, recognize, explore, and act upon his or her practice” (p. 59). I include elements of ongoing inquiry, exemplified through the writing of this paper, with respect to personal experience and an emphasis on the role of knowledge construction (Lassonde et al., 2009).

The production of scholastic knowledge usually first occurs for students during their time spent in the elementary school system. The Ontario school system, for example, is founded on principles of comprehensive education and, to fulfill these principles, all parties involved in the education process have set responsibilities. For instance, students are responsible for class attendance, good behaviour, and being considerate to teachers and fellow classmates (Ministry of Education, 2009). As part of the effort to provide students with a well-rounded education in Ontario schools, teachers also have responsibilities that include following specific Ministry of Education-

mandated regulations such as “preparing lesson plans and teaching classes, encouraging students in their studies and evaluating student work and progress, supervising students [sic] behaviour and maintaining classroom discipline and demonstrating good citizenship and respect for all groups of people” (para. 6). Perhaps the most pertinent of these obligations is the latter, which speaks to ideas of inclusivity and the right for all students to learn in an environment where all people are respected. The urgency of global education increases each day as the influx of students of many backgrounds enter Ontario schools, making global education a critical component of student experience (CIC, 2011). Unfortunately, beginning with the elementary system and extending into secondary schooling, ambiguity surrounding how to accomplish the goal of “good citizenship and respect for all groups of people” (Ministry of Education, 2009, para. 6) becomes problematic for all parties involved. For this reason, teacher candidates are encouraged to take part in study abroad programmes, raise their awareness of other ways of teaching and learning, and engage their students through enriched material to help increase student experience. One of the recommendations of the 2005 Rabat Commitment held in Rabat, Morocco, suggests that “more emphasis should be given to integrating intercultural learning in pre-school education and basic education, while pursuing it at the secondary school level, in higher and continuing adult education in a lifelong learning” (p. 3) and to “ensure that intercultural dialogue and engagement become core content of both in- and pre-service teacher education” (p. 4). When teacher candidates eventually transfer their teaching into practice (i.e., a classroom setting), they must be aware of the value of having a firsthand understanding of global education and use it in the formation of their pedagogy across the curriculum.

### **Focal Questions**

The following questions provide a focus for my study:

1. How can teacher candidates prepare for a dynamic and shifting classroom?
2. According to which values do teacher candidates teach?
3. How can study abroad experiences lend a hand to implementing global education?

These questions were formulated based considering how to successfully provide an optimal educational experience for all students, driven by a personal hypothesis that using global education can play an important role in its achieving. The role of the use of global education in the classroom was connected to student experience, as seen in the literature investigated. Although limited, this research shows that students experience growth both individually and collectively. The questions were developed by considering the teacher as one of the most prominent actors in providing student education both academically and experientially through using global education. The final chapter of this paper allows for educators and those interested in global education, in particular current and future teacher candidates, to explore the benefits of study abroad programmes and the potential for these experiences to positively impact their teaching and student life. With knowledge gained, the hope is that teacher candidates can apply it practically within their classrooms.

### **Importance of the Study**

While there is research focusing on study abroad programmes throughout a student's university career, minimal research attention has been focused on the positive effects of study abroad experiences in teacher candidate education programmes

(Braskamp & Chickering, 2009; Coryell, 2011; Cossolotto, 2009; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). For children to be comfortable in a socially inclusive world, where they see diversity of language, culture, and race as enriching rather than threatening, urgent classroom issues have to be addressed now, rather than in the future (Department for Education & Skills [DfES], 2004, pp. 3-4). With Canadian classrooms changing daily, teachers should be encouraged to go abroad to help base their teaching in global education which has numerous benefits including developing the student in a manner that cannot be measured with a grade on a report card. In this sense, it is not only the responsibility of teacher education programmes to produce quality teachers, but the academy also has a responsibility to elementary students beginning with their first encounters of education.

Engaging in transnational school-based experiences has the potential to promote a more open-minded perspective in approaching global education by engaging teacher candidates in different discourses (Hepple, 2010). Recent literature suggests that studying abroad transforms students' global perspectives and can increase self-reliance and self-confidence, something especially crucial for beginning teachers (Coryell, 2011). Moreover, Hepple (2010) also suggests that for teachers to take on global education, among other pedagogies, they need to imagine those alternative possibilities of progressive thinking in the classroom. Ladson-Billings (2009b) argues that in addition to school improvements, policy makers must pursue expanded notions of schools that include out-of-school experiences and social and economic policies that will enable children to attend school equally ready to learn. Educational research gives educators an opportunity to recapture humanity as the work of the teacher which is not merely about



analysing different data, labelling students as numbers, and observing case studies, but also about connecting with each student as an individual and attempting to understand his or her culture, family dynamic, and participation as part of a larger classroom and school community.

The empowering environment that global education hopes to achieve must be the opposite of what is traditionally found in many schools throughout North America (Renner et al., 2010). For example, while schools often claim to teach young children to be “inquisitive...while participating in a democratic society” (p. 50), the current education system more likely teaches students not to question and maintain the status quo. Many practicing teachers with experiences of inclusion in the classroom generally express support for inclusive education (Horsley & Bauer, 2010). However, some teacher education programmes still neglect to include information regarding global education for teacher candidates. For instance, many teacher candidates base their understanding of global education solely on prior knowledge from their undergraduate degrees, thus influencing their skills, attitudes, and knowledge of global education. The reason that a teacher is encouraged to take advantage of study abroad programmes alongside teacher candidate education is to help build this knowledge (AUCC, 2007). As research suggests, these experiences play into the integration of global education into the classroom and teaching praxis. Global education is an avenue for helping students to be successful in the classroom in addition to positively influencing policy makers to be mindful of students when creating policy in response to shifting demographics within schools. Future (and present) educators must be culturally sensitive and globally minded to help students gain an understanding of cultural heterogeneity and prepare them for a

global world that is more interdependently connected than ever before (Chickering & Braskamp, 2009; DfES, 2004).

### **Organisation of the Document**

Chapter One consists of a basic overview of global education in classrooms and an introduction to the issue. The investigation into the literature focusing on global education occurs in Chapter Two, where the bulk of the conversation centres on global education, changing classrooms, and establishing global education within the classroom through previous experiences abroad. Chapter Three outlines the narrative methodology that I used, while the results of the research are discussed in Chapter Four. Chapter Five examines possible applications of global education for teachers and policy makers based on the knowledge obtained in this paper, including a summary, discussion, and conclusion.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE OVERVIEW AND FINDINGS**

The questions developed through a common trend within the literature place study abroad experiences as a key factor for engaging in global education. Present-day classrooms that teach students of multiple intelligences, as an example, should also look to multiple literacies – global education being one of them (Johnson & Morris, 2010). Teacher educational experiences abroad are almost directly connected with the relevance of global education in the North American classroom (Mannion, Biesta, Priestley, & Ross, 2011). Though the major focus of this research paper is practical and experience-related, it can also inform important policy-related issues and frameworks. Global education, as defined by Lucas (2010), looks not only at cultural diversity, human rights, and prejudice reduction, but also suggests that teachers look beyond the scope of Canadian education and spread to other countries around the world; this context defines the range of examination throughout the paper. Similar to Lucas's arguments, Braskamp and Chickering (2009) and Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) elucidate the importance of study abroad programmes and their effects on future teaching. Global education is also seen by Cossolotto (2009) and Coryell (2011) as a way to use international experience and reflection to develop classroom teaching (i.e., through the implementation of global education). Ladson-Billings (1995, 2005, 2008) and Renner et al. (2010) further explicate this notion by drawing attention to culturally relevant teaching through the ideas of Whiteness and the importance of shifting the curriculum to reflect culturally shifting classrooms and communities at large. These authors' works in addition to other literature used throughout the paper become the basis for acknowledging the importance of experiences abroad and the recommendation to use global education in the classroom.

Nisbett (2003) speaks to the idea that every individual is “bicultural” with respect to social constraints and social interest: “our awareness of connections with other people, as well as how much we want to associate with other people, varies from time to time” (p. 228). Lucas (2010) helps to further explain this notion of how people look to themselves and others by examining teacher conceptualisations of global education. Often, teachers experience difficulties in developing an abstract meaning of global education. In fact, teachers’ impressions of global education reinforce a need for teacher education programmes to discuss it. Teachers, according to Lucas, must be proactive in attempting to gain knowledge and understand shifts in the educational field and, most importantly, to view global education as an important part of the curriculum regardless of student body demographics – over 80,000 students under the age of 14 are new to Canada (CIC, 2011, p. 15). Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) discuss continuing research into how teacher candidates’ cultural sensitivity training is internalised and how study abroad opportunities can be improved to be genuine and to have a profound effect on future teachers’ views of their diverse students and their ability to teach to and learn from them.

### **Global Education**

Global education is “deeply concerned with helping students develop the appropriate thinking and communication skills, as well as the knowledge and the attitudes, for living in a culturally diverse and globally interrelated world” (Lucas, 2010, p. 212). While the definition helps to describe what “Global Education” is, how teachers can help students to make a real connection and understand other places outside of Canada or their communities is most important. Global education achieves this connection by helping teachers to “[create] a common educational platform... so that

cultural handicaps between teachers and students and gaps in knowledge and educational opportunities can be reduced” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 5). Teachers have the opportunity to create this kind of space by turning their classrooms into world communities with critical activities (e.g., literacy exercises, language learning, games). Knowing the definition, and moving forward, it is advantageous to reflect on self-practices and learning by thinking of personal experiences when trying to define problem posing (Wink, 2004). Problem posing can lead one to think about liberation. If one of the purposes of education is human liberation, then why always try to “box in” ideas? Teachers often lose themselves and the “message” by trying to fit powerful ideas into a scope and sequence, the curriculum, ranges of skills, or another district-focused process. However, problem posing cannot be confined to these boxes. Liberated people bring to mind authors Maya Angelou or Hilaria Supa Huamán who Abdi and Shultz (2008) mention in their book. Hilaria is an activist, as well as the author of *The Story of Hilaria Supa Huamán a Rural Quechua Woman*, and she is a powerful example of a woman from an indigenous background who discusses important issues relevant to her. Moreover, she also provides teachers around the world a unique opportunity to engage in cultural activities with their students at both local and global levels. In the past, I had the opportunity to volunteer at the Multicultural Council of Windsor and Essex County. It was probably one of the most meaningful experiences because immigrants from Eastern Europe, conventional refugees from Somalia and Uganda, and new Canadians from Iraq let me into their lives and shared their stories with me. I learned how to listen and engage in a conversation, often, with smiles rather than words. Allowing students to connect with a group like this, even within their own communities can be both unique and profound

and extend onto a global platform.

Conversely, culture is more than what is depicted in the media, art, museums, and music. It has a much broader meaning and embraces a whole way of life of a group of people. In global education, it is essential to examine the multitude of dimensions that exist to better understand culture. Specifically, social class, ethnicity, and gender, among others, are often looked at through separate lenses, but teachers must regard their students as real and complex beings and members of many groups, therefore, understanding that membership in a particular group does not determine behaviour, but makes certain types of behaviour more probable. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005),

intercultural dialogue must be based on universally shared values and the principles of peace, human rights, tolerance, and democratic citizenship, forming an integral part of quality education. It must therefore fully be taken into account in curriculum renewal and improvements in content, methodology, teacher education and the learning process, also involving parents and communities. Such dialogue plays an equally important role for the revision of textbooks, the production of new educational materials and the effective use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). (p. 3)

This recommendation seeks to address the too-often exclusion of students' "experience, values, and viewpoints", especially of those from varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds, contributing to "a systemic barrier to success" (Ministry of Education, 1990, p. 5).

Teachers' conceptualisations of global education, however, certainly tie in with the relevance and connection they make to their own selves (Colby & Sullivan, 2009). While a

number of studies have explored global education, it is critical for teacher candidates (as well as practicing teachers) to understand both explicit and implicit knowledge beliefs in their profession. Horsley and Bauer (2010) argue that “many teacher education students are strangers to the professional world they hope to join” (p. 421). Essentially, these students may have come from educational backgrounds that did not introduce or encourage global education. Practicing teachers with experiences of inclusion generally express support for inclusive education, but are not always sure what this entails or how to go about “doing it”.

Promoting goals of social inclusion and approaches to diversity through global education is not about making drastic changes in the classroom. It is about being aware of simple day-to-day tasks. For instance, the lessons and activities that teachers select to fulfill curriculum requirements should be critical in an attempt to truly understand the ways in which theories and philosophies establish their pedagogical practices and the justification for using them. I recall that during my Bachelor of Education programme, teachers were expected to compile a portfolio in order to graduate. One of the issues I found was that depending on the advisor each teacher candidate had, different items would be assigned for completion of the portfolio. Basically, what was important to the advisor should be important to me. I found this extremely compartmentalised and forceful. My advisor asked me to include ten artefacts which I deemed relevant and influential as my reasons for wanting to be a teacher, a resume, and a personal philosophy of teaching, the latter being most striking to me. How could I possibly have completed an entire philosophy of teaching by the end of an eight-month programme with only nine weeks in the classroom? A quote from the 1988 California History-Social Science Framework (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2005) tells teachers that

the younger generation needs to understand our history, our institutions, our ideals, our values, our economy, and our relations with other nations in the world thus, the major focus is on American life with a passing reference to the rest of the world. (p. 75)

The contradictory notions of “our” and “a passing reference to the rest of the world” are problematic and suggest a more isolationist approach to education rather than a more wide-ranging one. I felt writing my philosophy was a direct reflection of this flawed way of thinking, and not a fault of mine, but rather a product of the school system to which I was exposed throughout my education. After removing myself from the Ontario system and having been exposed to other areas of the world, I realise cruciality in not over-defining global education but rather experiencing it, understanding it, and embodying it; thus, the need for teacher candidates to engage with global education in the classroom context is growing in significance. So as to reach a large number of practicing teachers, district curriculum coordinators must also be able to provide workshops and support for current teachers and administrators, a point touched upon later in this major research paper.

In recent years, tension between forces that focus on the shifting demographics in Canadian schools also draws attention to the need for social transformation in education. Teachers are put in potentially complex and delicate situations as they attempt to connect the local with the global as global education demands and where debate about its merit already exists. Furthering this notion is Apple (1999) who discusses the challenges of overcoming the dominance of reproductive forces, which are often stronger than transformative forces. Essentially, Apple promotes the idea that, through curriculum and



other forces, there is a limit placed upon teachers regarding what and how they teach and the existence of this limitation causes a struggle for teacher impartiality in the classroom. In fact, many teachers acknowledge that although “global citizenship is embedded in social...relations, ...political stance is always implicit” (Veugelers, 2011, p. 483). This forces the question of: “How can a teacher engage students in global education when teachers do not want to put too strong an emphasis on their own beliefs?” For instance, helping to decrease a pattern in the way that teachers respond to students unlike themselves or a reduction generative opinions about the Other can be a result of eliminating cultural stereotypes (Döring et al., 2010).

Understanding his or her own identity is a key factor that plays into developing a teacher’s own global perspective (Colby & Sullivan, 2009). Identity is a major paradigm for understanding the development of the individual and, in turn, translates into an individuals’ beliefs about social responsibility. Identity in this case refers to someone’s sense of self which Grimshaw (2010) states is of “central importance” (p.246) in understanding how having a clear self-image can serve as a motivational force. For example, teachers who understand their own personal sense of civic and moral identity and sense of obligation to students can influence their teaching and, thus, the ways in which their students are influenced to think (Colby & Sullivan, 2009). Thus, moving forward, students’ potential for the formation and development of identity must be global; therefore, this potential must be enriched by more wide-ranging experiences, knowledge, and insights.

Barkhuizen and Feryok (2006) acknowledge that experiencing a different community of practice can help teacher candidates to identify and question their own

beliefs about teaching and learning. These insights can be gained through study abroad programmes.

### **Changing Demographics**

Teacher candidates' experiences enable them to have a significant impact on the children with whom they work and their families, an idea that is particularly poignant in Canadian schools where classrooms are rapidly changing. Of 1.8 million immigrants to Canada in the 1990s, 17 per cent were school-aged (CIC, 2011). This number continues to grow. In fact, the birth rates in Canada are low, so the proportion of immigrant school-aged children is particularly high in comparison (CIC, 2011). The number of immigrants to Canada has increased steadily since 2003, with the most recent figures from CIC (2011) showing that over 280,000 people immigrated to Canada in the year 2010 alone (p. 3). Immigrants can include family class, economic class, and refugees, but no matter the classification, many of the students now entering into Canadian classrooms are not natural born Canadian citizens, but arrive from countries all around the world.

Canadian teachers are in a unique predicament. No matter their race, they must attempt to grasp that they are privileged to have obtained a university education. Teachers must understand how university education has the ability to deny power to others. By this recognition, teachers must reposition themselves to work alongside each other and minimise their hierarchical position relative to other staff, students, and students' families. Teachers must maintain constant vigilance of the socialised power relationships that exist to constantly challenge any predisposed approach that may contribute to further dehumanisation. When teachers imagine the development of global education, they begin to unpack the layers of injustice and help to reorganise and

restructure the education system – expanding and intertwining, generatively, with reciprocal partners.

Helping students to recognise and honour their own cultural beliefs and practices, while acquiring access to the wider culture is the role of schooling (Ladson-Billings, 2008). This is where students are likely to have a chance of making informed decisions about the lives they wish to lead; however, because education has been treated as mechanical processes, placing emphasis on technical issues and ignoring the cultural experiences of the learners involved, it is often difficult for students to honour their individualism before sharing their own identities with a group (Bruss & Macedo, 1985). A newer, more communal, and humanising global education must help teachers to examine the historical and sociological backdrops that create individual situations in this bigger global community and reinforce the maintenance of structural inequalities. For example, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2000) discuss how our curriculum still has its roots in post-colonialism and continue to use “[Euro-centrist] universalism” (as cited in Manathunga, 2007, p. 369) to describe the ways in which Western experiences govern all others, similarly to the out-dated and non-representative curriculum that is still in use in Ontario schools (i.e., Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity policy from 1993). It is through socialisation that teachers learn “the prescription of characteristics” assigned to oppressed people (Renner et al., 2010, p. 50). Therefore, it is through desocialisation that teachers learn to be transformative in their teaching and take a step in creating a more equitable world.

### **Classroom Contexts**

Pike (2008) suggests that global education is not a new idea; rather, it is a concept

that has been pursued for more than half a century. The late 1700s, going even further back in time, showed a great increase in travel for pleasure throughout Western Europe, commonly known as the Grand Tour. The Daily Universal Register of 29 August 1786 found:

to such an amazing pitch of folly is the rage for travelling come, that in less than six weeks, the list of Londoners arrived in Paris has amounted to three thousand seven hundred and sixty, as appears by the register of that city. (as cited in Black, 2010, p.1)

The Grand Tour came about with the purpose of making young people global citizens. While it was primarily enjoyed by the wealthy, opportunities to be global citizens today are not limited to the wealthy, but to people who simply have the desire to be global citizens. Though money does play a factor in global travel, grants are often available through educational institutions or government funding, especially for those in need of financial assistance. Additionally, and in moving forward, many schools include educational travel abroad as part of their strategic plans for internationalisation. Though it was the British who fervently pushed forward The Grand Tour, other smaller nations gained momentum in the years that followed. Since their independence in the late 1800s, it was common that most youth in Luxembourg would leave Luxembourg for the chance to study abroad (Rohstock & Schreiber, 2013). Before human interdependencies came on the world scale, Luxembourgers were already recognising their returned emigrants as “agents of international knowledge and cultural transfer” (Rohstock & Schreiber, 2013, p. 176). Through the formal development of the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights, there are many other early examples that encourage global citizenship

extending from the 1930s to the mid-1990s, including the Council for Education in World Citizenship, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the Global Classroom Initiative. Over that time, the world has also witnessed much change, “characterized by the interdependence and interconnectedness of nations and cultures” (Pike, 2008, p. 223).

How and where then is global education present in current educational discourse in this long legacy presented through generations? Who is held responsible for moving forward? Global education in Canada is sadly “not a current priority for schools, school boards, or teacher education programmes” (Pike, 2008, p. 224). One of the prevailing issues is that even after decades of global education advocacy in Canada, many key elements have not changed (e.g., only small groups of teachers and organisations are pushing for the awareness of global issues and/or implementing concepts of global education within their classrooms). This issue is also connected to a general lack of funding according to the strategic planning of politicians. Moreover, the issue of resource availability remains at the top of the list for schools having available or sufficient resources to carry through with global education.

Nonetheless, a lack of resources cannot be a standalone reason why global education “doesn’t work.” There certainly are a variety of models and visions of global education available, with NGOs and other organisations often providing free curriculum packages. Researchers and theorists, such as Heater, Selby, Hébert, Lynch, Banks, Boulding, Nussbaum, Noddings, and Griffith, discuss concepts like plural and parallel citizenship, flexible citizenship, active global democracy, global competency, building global civic culture, cosmopolitan education, and multidimensional citizenship. All of

these can be shaped and moulded in ways that best fit each classroom culture to play a role in implementing global education. Teachers should also take advantage of familiarising themselves with the work of various NGOs. This could include Oxfam, the Canadian Council for International Cooperation, and organisations like UNESCO, all calling for action to promote global education as much as any other literacy.

Education has been treated as a mechanical process, placing emphasis on technical issues and ignoring the culture and experiences of students in Ontario schools. Global education has the potential to give educators a new lens through which to focus on the whole student (hooks, 1994). Thus, the teacher provides a voice and a new opportunity for those who would otherwise be without. It is true that teachers have “specific conceptions of the social relations” that are to take place in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 2009a, p. x); this is one of the first things they must recognise and tackle within themselves. On the contrary, “how we think has long been engrained in our minds...how we think about social contexts, students, curriculum, and instruction” (Ladson-Billings, 2008, p. 163). Instead of the specific lessons and activities that teachers select to fulfill curriculum requirements, teachers must begin to understand the ways that theories and philosophies establish their own pedagogical practices and the justification for using them (Ladson-Billings, 2008).

The importance of acknowledging rights, responsibilities, and the participation of all students is built upon the framework of an individual’s awareness, loyalty, and allegiance that can and should extend beyond the borders of the nation to encompass all humankind (Pike, 2008). That being said, teachers need to be especially conscious of global reality, but also of a community’s fabric at a local level. Global educators weave

the world's fabric together, forming a unique quilt and a new vision. However, three major challenges that face teachers in their pursuit of promoting global education are the lack of plausible alternatives to the prevailing legend, the need for incentive for change, and the discouragement of individual action. Looking closer, gaps continue to widen between people of different socioeconomic status. Interdependence deepens and denial of its existence also increases, but how do teachers foster personal responsibility and/or motivate students to care about others across nations? Teachers, and students, need to believe that change is possible. Without this component in thinking, people lean more toward accepting the undertaking as too onerous rather than being positive and hopeful.

The role of global education continues to tell a story. It is one that has prevailed by being so “deeply embedded within the social and institutional structures that govern our lives that multiple layers... government, media, business, and civil society...[are all] required to work in harmony if significant change is to occur” (Pike, 2008, p. 230). Pike (2008) also perfectly states educators' unique situation as a “Catch-22”: Global education may not be viewed as a current priority by social and institutional structures, but it is teachers' responsibilities to ensure students move toward understanding about “what to do” because, unfortunately, many students still lack the knowledge and skills think critically at the personal, local, national, and international levels (Scottish Executive, 2001). The challenge for teachers comes with presenting students with critical pedagogy (critical, creative, and caring) for discovering the implications of society's structures and the ways in which these structures affect everyone's lives.

To develop this global thinking, teachers must acknowledge that everyone faces global crises at some point, no matter how big or small. In Nancy Farmer's fictitious

novel *A Girl Named Disaster* (1996), Nhamo Jongwe is an 11-year old girl from Mozambique forced to face disasters: immigration, disease, death, hunger, survival. However, it does not take a novel, an academic journal, or statistics to validate these challenges as daily realities for far too many people. By introducing activities that allow students to connect with concepts such as *water* (e.g., accessibility, sustainability, environmental protection, power, transportation, drinking, bathing), an awareness of its importance around the world builds from the framework of global education. Riverbend (2005), an anonymous online blogger from Iraq, speaks to the importance of water in her life in her 8 September 2003 entry “Under the Palm Leaves”:

The water was off and on again today. We filled all the bottles and containers. The water pressure was really low and evidently, our super-low garden faucet is one of the only ones in the area dribbling water at intervals. The neighbors have all sent buckets, pots and messages of love and gratitude... perhaps I have found a job.  
(p.53)

Farmer and Riverbend are examples of how literature and asking questions can begin to demystify a particular worldview (often Western) that is invading education systems and disallowing students to look at not only *their* world but also “*the*” world more holistically. Pike (2008) suggests that to develop global thinking, teachers must

tear down the artificial walls of the curriculum, to help students understand how the separate pieces fit together, how to recognise connections and relationships between various social and global phenomena, how to think long term and see the interrelationship of past, present, and future. (p. 232)

Fostering student interest in local action and participating within the local community



helps bring more significance to “seeing the big picture.” This can be achieved through volunteering, community-based learning, and partnerships between school, home, and community. So, by being critical of the world and acknowledging there are many different realities, global education has a better chance to press on.

Undoubtedly, even through suggestions and directives, there is not one ‘simple solution’ for complex problems; a Band-Aid approach cannot be applied to the world’s issues. However, a better understanding surrounding the complexities that do exist by recognising the relevance of the media age with the growth of access to information is possible. Mass media, for example, has its own values, assumptions, and biases and should not be considered truth; rather, it is fundamental to engage with each other in being *critical*. Another way to recognise world complexities in teaching global education is by demonstrating a commitment to global ethics and the development of a global moral community. The circle of concern must expand to include all people and issues within it and, in particular, beyond the Canadian context.

Teachers maintaining their fundamental standards of practice while embracing differences they may encounter will remain a challenge and will not be conflict-free. Globalisation has profoundly changed the future for Canadian students. Whether in a small village community or at a new university campus, students need to become comfortable with a world that now stretches far beyond their home communities. Understanding the development of various frameworks and the context in which they were created, engaging students with effective critical pedagogy, and applying creative methods within classrooms all help to move nearer to global education. In other words, global education is not the “ends,” but rather a “means” toward a goal of global

responsibility when placed in the hands of skilled and willing teachers.

### **Teacher Education as a Space for Global Education**

University students' interest for international issues and experiential learning has increased in recent years because they understand the added value an international dimension brings to their education. Students in the AUCC's 2007 report were cited as saying that internationalisation was a factor in developing global citizens, increasing civic engagement, and enhancing diversity and global awareness (p. 6). However, despite the interest, Bok (2006) concludes that students today receive "very little preparation either as citizens or as professionals for the international challenges that are likely to confront them" (p. 233). This is no different for teachers who are, in most cases, products of the same system. As the world becomes more connected with each passing day, there are economic, cultural, environmental, and political challenges that demand international experience (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2009, p. 120). Without going abroad, an individual cannot acquire a complete wide-ranging perspective on global culture (Coryell, 2011, p. 9). Going abroad is not the only avenue to gain such a perspective; however, research has shown that students have developed these skills principally through abroad experiences in various countries such as Sweden, Algeria, Canada, Australia, and China (Brodin, 2010; Donnelly-Smith, 2009; Döring et al., 2010). The action of going abroad, then, seems to be more pertinent than the location, as many of the findings are similar despite the country of study.

Looking at recent statistics, a record number of American students were studying abroad, up almost 10 per cent in 2007 from the previous year and surging exponentially to almost 150 per cent from only a decade earlier (Cossolotto, 2009; Institute for

International Education 2008; Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josic, & Jon, 2009). In their 2007 report, the AUCC discusses how leaders in government, business, and, especially, education, claim study abroad participation as a factor in a nation's future.

Research on international opportunities for teacher candidates is built on the premise that when going abroad, they participate in a cultural exchange implying that a homogenous "home" culture comes in contact with a "foreign" culture (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011, p. 1142). Short-term study abroad experiences fewer than 2 months are the most common type of study abroad programme (Donnelly-Smith, 2009, p. 12). However, many of these programmes are found as part of undergraduate study and not often as part of concurrent and consecutive education (teacher education) programmes. This is where reciprocal learning programmes help to provide international engagement to undergraduate degrees.

The reality of varied student population in Canadian classrooms means that a multidimensional approach is required for teaching. For an international experience to have a solid foundation, teacher candidates should be encouraged to explore their own cultural backgrounds and biases to examine how these affect their experiences and have an impact on what they do and how they view and interact in the world (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011, p. 1142). Recent literature also shows that intercultural communication has challenged the traditional Western view of the social world, as "a collection of discrete and mutually exclusive cultures which constrain and determine the actions of individuals" (Grimshaw, 2010, p. 243). Furthering Grimshaw's (2010) notion, it is not to say that teachers should take an "essentialist perspective" (p. 244) and look at each culture as identical or associated only with certain locales. Instead, it is central to

recognise the diversity within cultures, as well as the blurring of boundaries that occurs when communities interact and “allow a more direct dialogue among peoples and communities” (UNESCO, 2005, p. 2).

The continuing internationalisation of the world and the increase in academic mobility means that opportunities for study abroad are also increasing. As an example, the Hong Kong government sponsors teacher candidates enrolled in ESL-streamed programmes to travel abroad for language immersion (Hepple, 2010). These types of programmes offer not only language study, but also permit school-based learning and experiences as part of a unique chance to engage in both culture and education simultaneously. According to the Hong Kong Minister for Education, it also allows students to widen their perspectives (Hepple, 2010). This programming directly combats the stereotype that is often associated with Chinese, as an example, who are often linked to “a long-established Orientalist discourse within which the liberating, modernising ‘West’ portrays itself in self-flattering opposition to an unenlightened, culturally deficient ‘Rest’” (Grimshaw, 2010, p. 246). Critical and thoughtful learning occurs through study abroad programmes when there is a transformation of meaning perspectives that are most often associated with a fundamental shift in values and beliefs toward the object; a change in thinking from an emphasis on concrete facts to the abstract, or a change in “what we know” to “how we know”. Nisbett (2003) describes this perfectly when he says “[t]he world is constantly changing and full of contradictions...[and] to understand and appreciate one state of affairs requires the existence of its opposite; what seems to be true now may be the opposite of what it seems to be” (p. 13). Global education provides a mechanism that engages students with the real world they know and enables them to

think beyond their personal knowledge and needs to value their responsibilities outside of themselves (Tarrant, 2010). In essence, this means the need for a transformational learning process in which new values, beliefs, and meanings are created or existing values strengthened. Studies have shown that students who study abroad develop a deeper understanding and respect for global issues, more favourable attitudes toward other culture, stronger intercultural communication skills, improved personal and professional self image, and better foreign language skills (Salisbury et al., 2009, p. 121).

Holliday (1999) notes the limitations of taking an essentialist “large culture” (p. 248) approach, which fundamentally ignores the individuality of students’ varying background. Instead, he suggests adopting a “small culture” approach, which can help teachers to understand their students’ behaviours and dispositions and then be able to connect them all into an exclusive group unity. In a similar vein, the personal aim in my study abroad experience was to help me rid myself of pre-existing constructs of “the Chinese learner” or “the Chinese teacher” based on assumptions that people are determined by their Confucian heritage or that tie social identity to a homogenised view of a national culture. As Brodin (2010) suggests, using a different educational setting to look at the curriculum through a global perspective allows partakers of reciprocal learning programmes to recognise this opportunity not only to enhance themselves academically, but also to learn more about themselves in the process, eventually resulting in an increased understanding of others. Study abroad experiences can profoundly influence individuals’ pursuit of further graduate studies, career paths, and global engagement (Paige et al., 2009). In order to effect change at the elementary level, the internationalisation of education needs to begin with teacher education programmes. The

expectation of these programmes is that a greater cultural knowledge in both students and teachers is obtained, and there are benefits that strongly influence the interaction of future generations of students (Brodin, 2010). Teacher candidate study abroad programmes have the potential to facilitate teachers' realisation of other methods and techniques of teaching, ways of learning, awareness of sociocultural differences, opportunities to reflect and discuss experiences with classmates, meetings dedicated to engage in conversation, and observation of past and future practices in the "home" setting.

### **Engaging Students**

There is a real need to respond to the growing social and cultural diversity in the classroom (Horsley & Bauer, 2010). The AUCC (2007) reports that many Canadian universities' strategic plans now include internationalisation as key in building partnerships abroad to promote innovation in curriculum and diversity of programmes. However, the government must better reflect this shift in their policy at a national level. Provincial governments and ministries of education must develop new goals for schooling to ensure it "contributes to a socially cohesive society that respects and appreciates cultural, social and religious diversity" (Horsley & Bauer, 2010, p. 423). The implications, for instance, include developing a set terminology for global education. Moreover, professional learning opportunities are required for teachers at the pre-service and in-service levels (Horsley & Bauer, 2010).

According to Lin and Bates (2010) an example of how global education can be promoted is through home visits where teachers and parents can address their concerns and share their experiences. It is important to create a discussion between home and school. Further implications include working with mixed families. For example,

students coming from a biracial family were a major concern for participants. Teachers may be unsure of how to support children of multiracial and multiethnic backgrounds; however, in preparing both pre-service and in-service teachers to address sensitive issues such as race is indeed a vital element in the diversifying school setting.

Unfortunately, many students lack opportunities to “explore deeper philosophical issues related to knowing, nor consider knowing particular things in greater detail with an eye toward the process of inquiry” (Gaudelli & Siegel, 2010, p. 597). What teachers need to focus on is conveying to students the need to think critically about knowledge, including immersing them in an environment that is as diverse as that very knowledge. Gaudelli and Siegel are careful to point out, however, that “students do not view works like Osama as blank slates about Islam, Afghanistan, and women, but they also are shaped by that viewing and conversations which might flow from it” (p. 597). The way that teachers approach these kinds of discussions within the classroom is vital. Words often heard in the Western world such as “democracy” and “freedom” and “opinion” and “speech” are constantly used, but students must become critical assessors of what they learn and global education gives them the chance for them to do it thoughtfully.

By teacher candidates gaining knowledge through transnational experiences, upon return to their home countries, they would be enabled to have a significant impact on the children they work with and their families (Brodin, 2010, p. 573). The expectation of the programme provides a greater cultural knowledge in teachers, and this should strongly influence and interact with future generations. Certainly there are teachers who can teach to students of many backgrounds, helping them to achieve high levels of academic success. Unfortunately, much of the existing research that addresses successful teaching

is often associated with what Ladson-Billings (2008) would refer to as “teacher as heroic isolate” (p. 163).

Almost every educator is devoted to matters of diversity and social justice and finds him or herself confronted by varying issues. Sadly, some teachers insist there are no practical models that make global education possible. This, however, is not the case. There are many widely available resources (e.g., Teaching Tolerance, for example, is a website that has extensive research, information, and classroom kits offered in teaching diverse students). The real issue is that many educators are unaware, uninformed, and unmotivated. Chickering and Braskamp (2009) argue that global education can be enhanced if it is further interpreted within the context of educating students to be citizens of a global society.



### **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

Chana (2010) discusses findings from the National Advisory Committee on Development Education which report that despite the positive benefits of global education, “Canadian[s]...still have very little idea of what this whole subject is about, very little idea of the globality involved, the integration of issues, and the connection of Canada to this world of changes” (p. 165). Unfortunately, teachers and administrators believe that global education centres around the teaching of “others” in different countries, and that educating Canadian students about how not to take things for granted comparatively and is really about “fundraising” (Chana, 2010). This suggests that teachers must be proactive in educating themselves and engaging in awareness of issues near and far.

The research shows teachers bring better understanding of their students through engagement in transnational school-based experience because it is through these experiences that teachers have opportunities to engage with different professional discourses from those encountered in their “home” context (Hepple, 2012). Classrooms are changing, becoming more multicultural each year. A way for students and teachers to connect is by examining each other’s realities and lived experiences, and, by doing this, teachers are better-prepared to meet the needs of racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse learners.

This chapter helps to provide a framework of qualitative research design for this paper to explore personal experiences, benefits, outlooks, and feelings regarding my participation in a reciprocal learning programme; I chose qualitative research so I could explore emotional, social, and experiential components. This paper is founded in

narrative research as defined by Creswell (2008) as “[beginning] with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals” (p.54). This told story and many of the questions I had (regarding global education) transpired as a result of my Bachelor of Education experience, where I participated in an English as Second Language (ESL) course, as well as a reciprocal learning programme. I am the primary instrument of data collection. Additional research helped me to develop more of a background regarding existing research within these frameworks. I should also mention that when referring to individuals, pseudonyms are used in order to protect their anonymity.

### **Challenging Self for Change**

Anderson-Patton and Bass (2009) intimate that to explore self-experiences, it is critical to also explore “implicating identities” (Lassonde et al., 2009, p. 28). The following story was described in their paper:

I was caught between my belief that the self is intrinsic to transformation and my aversion to narcissism. My three-part graphic—Who am I? What and how do I teach? And what did I learn? forced me to articulate my living contradictions. I felt exposed through this process; however, the work reminded me how central personal voice, risk taking, and diversity, are in my teaching. Wrestling with how to articulate my teaching helped me stay more authentic with students. (p. 112).

Tackling the meaning of my experience and sharing it with others proved to be more difficult than I thought, much of which has to do with vulnerability “since the focus is on the self” (Lassonde et al., 2009, p. 5). My intention in writing this paper was to challenge my own belief systems and values and see how I could better understand them and become the most successful teacher I could be in the classroom by understanding my

students, being more aware of their own challenges, and being open to new ideas. Using this type of personal reflection in obtaining my findings allowed me the opportunity to connect with other colleagues who participated in the programme. It also allowed for me to discuss the programme with people who had not previously heard of it or of any reciprocal learning programme. Through discussion and interaction, I was able to answer the questions they had and also delve deeper within myself for authentic and real responses. I realised that my answers, however, did not only yield from this experience exclusively, but often cascaded from other culminating past experiences as well.

Undoubtedly, I felt drawn to moments of scepticism of my own work. *Is this less worthwhile than quantifiable, numerical research? How can I possibly measure the success of this programme? Do the limitations outweigh the benefits? What is the point?* In hindsight, I see the point, expressed quite well by Anderson-Patton and Bass (2002): it's about "trying something different, being vulnerable, exposing one's self, articulating one's teaching, and interacting with a wider world" (p. 112).

### **The Reciprocal Learning Programme**

Reciprocal learning programmes can vary in breadth, length, and scope and are exemplary in demonstrating how teacher participants can broaden their personal and professional development and extend that learning into their own classrooms. My specific programme, the Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Programme, stimulated the need to conduct further research in global education, driven by my personal hypothesis that global education has the potential to build a more inclusive classroom community than what now exists. My research is rooted in my observations, perceptions, and insights. The Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Programme was based on an

official exchange agreement between the University of Windsor, Canada and Southwest University (SWU), China. Students' home institutions issued different grants to help alleviate programme costs, but, for the most part, those who participated in the programme were responsible for covering their own living and travel expenses. It is noteworthy to mention that students from both institutions did not receive academic credit for their abroad experience. Rather, the Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Programme was a supplemental endeavour that students from the University of Windsor completed after their Bachelor of Education degree, while SWU students completed the Programme during the third year of a four-year Education degree.

September 2010 is when I became a teacher candidate and when I was enrolled in the class *Issues in Education* "Teaching EAL Learners in the Mainstream Classroom." This class was the forum where I first heard the term global education. This one academic year course taught by Dr. Shijing Xu had a special focus on linguistic and cultural diversity and multicultural education. It also covered the key contemporary issues that teachers encounter on a daily basis. It provided opportunities for participants to creatively explore issues surrounding diversity and global education in attempt to raise cultural awareness, hence working toward developing attributes of a culturally responsive teacher. One of the assignments that has remained with me to this day was the chance to connect with Wasimah, a special woman with the most contagious smile and positive disposition. As part of the class assignment, I was required to work with an English Language Learner (ELL) for the duration of the semester. It was up to each teacher candidate to find a community organisation with which to work. I chose to work with the Enhanced Language Training programme (ELT). This programme is geared toward

individuals older than 17 years of age, landed immigrants, or conventional refugees who have some knowledge of English and is designed to provide participants with the enhanced language training skills to work in service industries. Wasimah, a participant of the programme, lived in Iraq all her life, but due to escalating dangers and violence in Iraq resulting from the war, she found refuge in Syria for 3 ½ years with her husband and two children. However, the situation in Syria was hardly any better, so yet again, Wasimah and her family were displaced after being sponsored by the Canadian government in September 2009. She is educated at a post-secondary level and received a degree in Civil Engineering from the *University of Technology* and an additional degree from the *Institute of Christian Education* in Theology and Philosophy. Getting to know Wasimah's story was eye-opening to me, mostly because during our time together, she was eager to use oral language to tell me her story, but had difficulty producing some of her thoughts, ideas, and concepts. Her determination to share and connect was evident as she creatively conveyed her thoughts as I listened carefully. When Wasimah explained her reasons for coming "here", she dramatically "told" me how war-torn Iraq truly was and how much safer she felt in Canada. She tearfully tried telling me how her brother had survived a vicious attack and had lost part of his leg; he still hears ringing in his ear. She did not know certain words in English, but was able to recount through actions (*waving her arms to show an explosion*), making noises ("*boom*", "*blast*") and by drawing (*grenade/shards*).

Wasimah's case also showed me some of the cultural challenges immigrants face as they transition into living in Canada. Wasimah told me she had to visit her son's teacher for an interview. She understood everything the teacher said, but was too shy to

respond in fear of making mistakes. Though there was a translator in the room next door who was able to translate for her upon her request, she was too embarrassed to ask for help. She said part of this resulted from her background and Iraq as the kind of society that often suppresses women's speech and women's rights and expression. Despite Iraq's amended constitution to say everyone is equal "without discrimination because of sex" (Coleman, 2006, p. 24), many clerics and Islamist scholars say this is in direct violation of Sharia law and essentially held no momentum in progressing women's rights further. Wasimah taught me that though there are rules that govern languages, people give language meaning. We find strength, knowledge, and respect in cherishing others.

Through class participation, group work, and individual work, I was also able to develop a deeper understanding of issues related to language, culture, race, gender, religion, ability, and socioeconomic status. The students in our *Issues* class were placed into groups for another assignment. Not only was every group its own microcosm of cultures, but also of values and opinions regarding our given topic of Multiculturalism. It was interesting to be fully present in the experience. As we discussed, some of the challenges students might face in the elementary (or high school) classroom were the same issues we were attempting to tackle in working on our own presentations.

I was fortunate to have been exposed to various resources and hear experiences of other teacher candidates regarding linguistic and cultural diversity. Unfortunately, *Issues in Education* was an optional course and, thus, exposed only teachers in the ESL stream to this important content. It was a personal endeavour after taking this course to continue developing as a teacher by gaining knowledge on these global issues of which we had just skimmed the surface, and so I decided to participate in the Teacher Education

Reciprocal Learning Programme developed by Dr. Shijing Xu between the University of Windsor, Canada and SWU, China. The purpose of this programme was to broaden the horizons of future teachers as they entered into a more globalised world of teaching, with the main objectives as follows:

- to provide an exceptional undergraduate experience with international engagement;
- to broaden teacher candidates' horizons for a society of increasing diversity in an increasingly globalised world;
- to foster international collaboration among faculty members at both universities who are interested in cross-cultural studies, international education, and multicultural education;
- to enhance the international reputation of University of Windsor;
- to provide teacher candidates with cultural and academic experiences that would enable them to work in multicultural and global contexts;
- to provide opportunities to education faculty members to collaborate on present and future endeavours;
- to explore curriculum of participating countries through, but not limited to, a series of workshops, lectures, seminars, and interactions;
- to explore curriculum through observation in local urban and rural K-12 school visits;
- to begin the conversation in establishing a network of students and educators in the field of education;
- to use reflexive practice before, during, and after the programme;

- to use gained knowledge from the programme to improve it for future cohorts; and
- to develop classroom teaching based on knowledge gained through participation in the programme (Xu, 2011)

Being able to achieve all of these goals would prove difficult. As much as I believed in the personal growth I could obtain through this programme, I also feel that my journey of enhanced action and the possibilities of growth through partnerships were equally as important (Renner et al., 2010). Throughout my one-month study tour in BeiBei, Chongqing, China in May and June of 2011, I engaged in global education, along with a small cohort of seventeen other University of Windsor teacher candidates. I was active in direct contact and interactions with SWU professors and students and with Chinese teachers and students at various schools in Southwest China. These schools included both urban and rural settings, kindergarten through grade 12, lectures, seminars and cultural events.

It was not until after the programme that I had actually seen the list of goals in the programme description, but in a way, I think I am better for it. I was able to create my own personal goals and what I wanted to personally achieve through my participation in the programme. Based on my past experiences volunteering within my community, and by working with specific individuals like Wasimah and Jimmy (who I will speak about later), there were relevant factors I was looking for. For instance, how the Chinese education system viewed students from different cultural backgrounds (in this case, students from the “other” 55 ethnic groups other than the Han majority). Also, I was looking for how the Chinese system regarded students with intellectual, physical, and



behavioural disabilities.

We were greeted in Chongqing by our buddies, students involved in the Programme who were assigned to be our helpers during our stay. One of my buddies was a Chinese alumna who had already come to Windsor and my other buddy would be coming to Windsor in the Fall of 2011. A sign that read “WELCOME EXCHANGE STUDENTS FROM UNIVERSITY OF WINDSOR IN CANADA” (see Appendix A) stretched across the front of the on-campus housing that would be ours for a month.

One of my most profound moments was visiting a school for students with special needs. This urban school visit was slated for the beginning of the Programme. Looking back now, I almost wish it had been near the end of the schedule, so I could have better applied my knowledge of Chinese culture to my observation and been less wide-eyed. I can remember riding the bus with my colleagues as we drove down the bumpy windy streets toward the school. As we approached the school, gated in with tall black wrought iron, we passed a little girl along the way who was being accompanied by a parent. She had an obvious walking impairment and I was baffled that she had to hobble to school with barely suitable crutches. I recently found out that “there is no general transportation scheme to take students with disabilities to mainstream schools” (Human Rights Watch, 2013, p. 37). A report carried out in February 2013 cited the reason for the lack of transportation for students with disabilities as students either lived in close proximity or on premises of the school, which Human Rights Watch (2013) has identified and disputes as likely untrue. I was pleasantly surprised as we walked through the doors of the schoolyard, especially after having watched the little girl struggle with her little legs to campus. Hundreds of students were in the courtyard ready to greet us. As part of

everyday warm-up, students participated in a massively organised and rehearsed session of Daily Physical Activity (DPA) (see Appendix B). It looked like an enjoyable enough way to start the day. Then, each of the Canadian teachers was split into classes to observe. It did not take me long to figure out that students with varying disabilities were at this school. Students with visual impairments, hearing impairments, Down Syndrome, behavioural issues, and mental conditions were all lumped together. The class I first observed was a group of students with hearing impairments; they were not placed together according to age, ability, or skill, but instead, for their disability. What was even more disturbing to me is that the teacher who was using sign language to communicate with her students, only signed for half of the time, while the other half she was speaking in Mandarin. According to *As long as they let us stay in class* (2013), “students with hearing impairments...[can] often not follow along because the teachers walk around...and do not to provide written notes, and there is no sign language instruction in most schools” (p.3). Not to mention, the view of the teacher’s hands was partly obstructed by the tall counter top from which she refused to step out from behind. For the day’s assignment, a task to keep the students “busy”: organising yarn according to colour and then proceeding to glue tiny pieces on paper to make a picture. It was math class (see Appendix C).

Another moment that I can play back perfectly in my head is meeting a beautiful girl with Down syndrome. She was just a ray of sunshine and could not wait to give me the biggest hug; she was so loving and affectionate. Only 10 minutes later, I saw her get spanked by a teacher because she had been walking up the wrong side of the carefully colour-divided stairs (the red side for going up the stairs, the yellow side for going down

the stairs) (see Appendix D). I was horrified. The anger the teacher held in her eyes toward Sunshine was not only inhumane, but also inhuman. In China, students with disabilities are essentially denied fair access to education. Only through completing some recent research, I discovered nearly 25 per cent of students with disabilities have no basic education at all and even if they are enrolled in a school, they are often asked to leave later on. Parents are unaware of their and their children's rights regarding education and often have nowhere to turn. And, if not for any other reason, a school for students with disabilities should at least have multiple elevators to service the accessibility needs of students. This school had only one.

The days that followed proved to be just as positive as the previous were challenging. As I had briefly mentioned, each school in China participates in its own form for DPA. Students line up quietly in the hallways and prepare to head out to their oversized football field or courtyards (see Appendix E). What I instantly thought of upon watching is how creepily resembles the military, simply by looking at the posture, discipline, and chants (see Appendix F); There was also marching (see Appendix G) Children could easily be spotted missing (see Appendix H). In one of the classrooms of the high schools we had attended, I counted 87 students in one classroom (see Appendix I). Not a single sound coming from anyone's mouth made for an eerie setting. The white paint was slightly peeling off the walls with the help of the early summer humidity (see Appendix J). What I was more amazed at was the level of respect that students held toward their teacher and the instructions that were given. Teacher gives task. Students listen. Students work. I was afraid to take notes for fear of my paper rustling. In my view, a classroom is a place for noise, questions, interaction, and learning. It was not until

after I had completed the Programme that I understood a quote to fit in perfectly to explain this stillness. Lao Tzu, a respected and contemporary Confucius philosopher of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, said “Silence is a source of great strength”. A modern *lǎo shī* (老師) or teacher of his time, it is just one of Lao Tzu’s teachings that have held modernity and continued to maintain relevance in the Chinese classroom.

The week following our visits to schools with disabilities, we had gone to visit a kindergarten school (see Appendix K). Children from ages three to five were running up to me, wanting to hug and cuddle. In this moment, I was not sure what to do. All I could think of was back to my *Law and Ethics Course* at Windsor taught by the superintendent of education of the GECDSEB and, on hugging children, she said in all cases, and no matter what: “Don’t.” I was assured, however, that in China, hugging children was accepted and even encouraged. I felt better.

There were so many other activities I saw in the schools that I tried making sense of. In one music class I had observed, students were sat at their desks, then, on the school’s loud speakers, I heard “yī, èr, sān...”, which translates to one, two, three. During their count to 10, students were pushed on their faces and massaged their cheeks and temples. I was confused as to what was happening but later discovered that this is a facial exercise widely-practiced in China to supposedly prevent near-sightedness.

In our supposed down time, though we were always on the go, there were a variety of activities which my colleagues and I were able to take part in outside of a classroom setting. Some of the options we had on our off days were participating in *tài jí quán* (太极拳), a form of shadow boxing meant to emphasise focus and grace in movement, *kung fu* (功夫), a Chinese martial art, or listening and dancing to traditional

Uyghur music, a muqam (维吾尔木卡姆). Each of these activities was organised and led by university students from the Southwest University community. I instantly knew that I had to try the muqam and connect with one of the largest ethnic minority groups in China. The Uyghur community easily paralleled with Canada's aboriginal communities; they fearfully live outside of hegemonic norms in society where the majority of people do not understand them, their celebrations, or beliefs, nor do they care to honour their rights.

While I was a Graduate Assistant, I worked with students pursuing their Masters of Education. Much of our work included working together in individual and group settings, conversational and informal meetings, and guidance through their queries in English. It was just one of these conversations that a Chinese (and Uyghur) student of mine said, "If you clench a handful of sand more tightly, it leaks from your hands more quickly" (meaning the more the government tries to have a stranglehold on their students and their freedom and rights, the more control they will actually lose). Most recently, and occurring only days ago, Chinese police claim that a "carefully planned terrorist attack in the heart of Beijing" was carried out by an extremist Muslim Chinese minority from Xingjian after a van was blown up outside of Tiananmen Square. From my experience, I remember a strong police force (see Appendix L); however, the only discussion of this event in China has been listed only on the micro blog of the police and international news sources and has not even been discussed in state-owned Chinese news reports. What is known is that the people of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, known during the Qing Dynasty as Huījiāng (回疆) or the "Muslim Frontier", are the constant target of cultural, linguistic, and religious oppression as they try to protect their rights to their Islamic faith from the atheist Chinese government which roots its ideologies in Marxist

Communism.

Upon completing the programme, it took quite a while to ease back into Canadian time, perhaps because of the twelve-hour time difference between Chongqing and Windsor, or perhaps it was the new knowledge I had gained, but in the months that followed, I continued to volunteer my time along with other alumni to help enrich the Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Programme with a variety of extracurricular and cultural activities and events for the visiting Chinese teacher candidates who visited Canada in Fall 2011. The Chinese participation in the programme was slightly different than the Canadian students' participation. The Chinese delegation spent the entire fall semester at the University of Windsor and participated in classes at the Faculty of Education, as well as in placements in various schools in the public board, just as other students enrolled in the Bachelor of Education programme (see Appendix M). The Canadians would often debrief with the Chinese participants regarding their views on the Canadian education system in informal settings. The Chinese candidates were surprised at the challenges Canadian teachers faced regarding classroom management. "Our students would not dare disrespect a teacher," they would say. Or, "Even if a student receives a bad grade in China, it is not the teacher's fault but the student's". They also did not understand the intense pressure on teachers in Canada to have familiarity with all subjects. In China, teachers from elementary school through to high school teach one subject only. We learned a lot from each other through these conversations in addition to interactive seminars and lectures that we had assembled encompassing topics such as music instruction, curriculum, and differentiated instruction. But by engaging in informal activities, like playing laser tag, touring old haunted mansion, or going out for dinner, we

formed bonds that were nurtured through laughter and a mix of languages. I was excited, and my Chinese colleagues were intrigued, when while out for dinner the server understood my Mandarin after I had ordered jiǎo zi (dumplings). It only took months of practicing my Pīnyīn and tones, but that moment was worth it. It was only around this time and after our conversations that I had begun to revisit my journal entries that I had written while participating in the Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Programme during the months of May and June 2011.

Anderson-Patton and Bass (2002) suggest that authenticity must be at the heart of a teacher's work. I personally, and unintentionally, discovered this while keeping those very journals. Using both reflexive journals and observational notes helped to inform my narrative research. By later reflecting on both concurrently written journals and notes, I began to truly discover how very important it is to be authentic not only in my writing, but also in my translation of ideas about authenticity into reality. This has helped me to distinguish material worth reading and writing and thus gain understanding of what is it exactly I would like to see within my own classroom, with global education being one of the most important elements.

Returning to my entries has brought to light some key issues. In particular, my entry on 23 May, 2011 reads "Question to think about: Why did I decide to go into education in the first place?" This was almost immediately followed by: "The truth is, I think I realise that the power of teaching is enormous." What I did by asking this question was start an honest conversation with myself and, in that moment, I thought of Henry James' 19<sup>th</sup> century work *What Maisie Knew*. Maisie Farange's gaze from outside, staring through "the hard window-pane of the sweetshop of knowledge," the "the crisis

and urgent need for knowledge in the face of knowledge denied” (McMaster, 2005, p. 52). Only one week into the Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Programme, I had expressed my own frustrations regarding aspects of the Chinese education system: “I feel like no one can answer questions regarding MODIFICATION, DIFFICULTIES, or BARRIERS... beating around the bush!!” (May 20, 2011). And like Maisie, my desire to experience knowledge outside of what I knew was not unchallenged. Even in asking critical questions, too often it is the case that teachers and students are denied the information they request and are left looking through a window; it is the individual’s motivations that lead them to dig deeper.

The one-year anniversary just passed of the gruesome actions toward a young Pakistani teenager who dug deeper. On 9 October 2012, “armed with pen, enlightened with knowledge, and charged with the passion of fighting for the right to girls' education” 14-year-old Malala Yousafzai was carefully targeted and shot in the head and neck by the Taliban (Fazl-E-Haider, 2013, p.73). Miraculously, after months of surgeries and rest, Malala is slowly recovering and her fight for education has only just begun. But it brings to light what some researchers are beginning to call the Malalaian theory: “that education is the best drone to combat the radicalization of people...only education can bring about a change in the peoples' radical mindset” (Fazl-E-Haider, 2013, p.73).

The case of Malala is certainly radical, but teachers still have the opportunity to take small steps toward positive change in the classroom. In my attempt to dig deeper to find out how, a shift happened for me during the Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Programme where I changed from “student” to “student and teacher”. This occurred about halfway through and was much like what Sanders (2006) describes as the thirst for



knowledge “accompanied by a quest for language to articulate it” (p. 381). During this period, I noted that, as a teacher, I had to “BE HONEST...” because “teaching is telling the truth in the best way I can, not about knowing all the answers” (May 23, 2011).

Literature suggests that teachers must do this by listening to the voices with whom relationships are shared. In relation to the new, strange world around me, I knew my honest writing would be crucial, even if I did not completely understand why or when it would mean something.

I cannot help but find more connections with my entries. “While I’m doing research, what is the reason for this as a researcher? For education? In what way can my research make it better?” (May 23, 2011). The answer comes somewhere when the thinking and reflecting turns into the understanding that education must be an honest dialogue where a greater sense of sharing must exist (See Appendix N). And when I think of sharing, I think of my favourite books and the knowledge and wonder with which they have bestowed me, my vibrant friends from all over the world, and my lovable wacky family.

I am a first generation Italian-Canadian who grew up with all four grandparents, constantly surrounded by their Italian language of the kitchen, of the family, and of the heart. And during university, I switched my undergraduate degree from Political Science and English to Political Science and Spanish because I fell for the writing of Pablo Neruda and his intimate descriptions of love and nature. Perhaps he captured me when he said “quiero que sepas una cosa.” (I want you to know one thing). What could it be?

It was only recently that I also started learning Portuguese. The University of Windsor has a programme through which Brazilian students come to Canada for up to a year and a half to study their subject area and improve their English language skills. I was lucky

to have made a friend enrolled in this programme; each time Antonio and I get together for a chimarrão (yerba mate), we practice our language skills. He uses his colloquial English and I work on my Portuguese by sticking post-it notes on everyday objects. Thankfully, my background knowledge of Italian and Spanish has helped me to better understand one of our most recent language lessons: in Portuguese, “to speak” or “to talk” translates to *falar* and “to converse” is *conversar*. When Antonio asked me the difference between the two, I thought carefully. What is the difference between “to talk” and “to converse”? The best answer I could give was that “to converse” there needs to be someone else on the other side with whom you are communicating and listening. In matters of the classroom, this element of conversation is probably one of the most significant.

Teachers must be truly present in their work because that lodges true intent and authenticity in the heart of their work. They cannot look on their students with predisposed notions of who they are or why they have certain attributes. While trying to understand their purpose as educators, the hope is that an understanding and making sense of the needs of each individual student is achieved. Through honest teaching, educators carry an attitude of passion where possibility exists and where “soulful education that is shared rather than imposed” (23 May, 2011). *É importante que os professores tenham um diálogo honesto com si mesmos, mas também conversar com pais, alunos e suas comunidades.*

I realise understanding who I am as an individual, being honest with myself, asking critical questions, and figuring out what is absolutely necessary to include as part of my own teaching practices. It is not so much the journal entries that are strewn throughout this paper, it is the process of self-discovery and a shift in personal beliefs that translates into classroom philosophy and pedagogy through reliving the moments in my mind. The importance of

becoming a reflective teacher is not a new phenomenon and Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) reiterate reflection as a crucial aspect of many teacher education programmes. Through reflection, teacher candidates can, as mentioned by Korthagen and Vasalos, develop their pedagogy and draw insights from their practice, which will eventually guide their future teaching. It will permit more time for thinking about the true relevance of the lesson, its connections to students, and if what students have learned matters when they leave the classroom. Thinking and doing are reflexively intertwined and knowing arises experientially from reflecting in and on practice. However, while the benefits of reflective practice as a process of raising awareness are accepted, many studies neglect to identify what new understandings for improving their teaching practice have been gained by participants through this process (Marcosa, Sanchez, & Tillema, 2011). In addition, other research in the area of reflection and reflective practice has had a strong influence on self-study (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Wink, 2004). The self-study approach of research provides a foundation for not only teachers, but also for teacher educators who may incorporate similar methods to systematically study their practice (Lassonde et al., 2009). Through reflection on my practice, I was able to examine and strive to make sense of my teaching by being creative in the personal journey of my growth and development (Zeichner, 1999).

As O'Sullivan (1999) mentions, while acknowledging the importance of reflective practice for professional development, it is often noted that teacher candidates have particular difficulty engaging in such processes (p. 311). Inevitably, my experience alone does not capture the complexity and diversity of curriculum, pedagogy, and praxis, within or between educational systems. However, Brodhead (2011) holds that to discover and truly learn about educational systems worldwide, and, in my case China,

one must draw from personal experience as well as the work of researchers, other teachers, and students worldwide. This helps students to amplify what they learn in the classroom by applying that knowledge to “real world” experiences.

### **Limitations**

As is often the case in other studies, there were also limitations in this paper. I have tried my best to depict my experiences and thoughts regarding the changes that I believe occurred, and as other research has supported, through the participation in reciprocal learning programmes. At the same time, I also recognise that I cannot remove myself entirely from the process as I am both the participant and researcher. The intention of this paper was mainly to bring attention to this new research area (i.e., reciprocal learning programmes in teacher education programmes) and to personally gain more awareness of the issues that are especially important to me, not only as an educator, but also as an informed human being. Students must have the chance to advocate on their behalf and explore what is important to them, allowing time to ask critical questions about their world, having tough conversations, being appreciative of material things like books and a school, and non-material things like knowledge and safety and comfort.

I often converse with other participants in the Programme and we reflect on our memories in China. I would have liked to have conducted formal interviews with my Canadian colleagues to discuss their experiences; however, due to time constraints as well as the unavailability of many of the participants, this was not realistic. A more in-depth study would be able to ground the general conceptions that other papers spoke of in an Ontario elementary school classroom or, better yet, multiple classrooms throughout Canada’s largest diversifying communities.

This type of project would have been even more beneficial if it followed teacher candidates over a period of years. This could have commenced at the time of their teacher candidate programme followed by their participation in an experience abroad, and then observe them as full-time teachers in their own classrooms. This would have given the teachers ample time to construct global education within the classroom curriculum as well as discuss global education with other staff members and read research material related to the topic. However, teacher employment has decreased drastically so this in itself could have posed some other problems.

Another weakness was that the research sourced in this paper was limited. Due to the fact that global education is only now being pushed forward in classrooms, there is a significant lack of research that discusses global education as a main topic. While study abroad programmes were sometimes discussed throughout the literature, information regarding these programmes specifically relating to teacher candidates was limited though they have been around for centuries (to date, that would mean nearly 400 years since the inception of The Grand Tour).

The majority of the sources used throughout this paper dealt with countries in North America and other Western nations, curbing exploration in East-East exchanges or between countries of less economic wealth. With the limited and still growing research, further papers were obtained through the works of other cited of papers. Moreover, it is worth noting that I was limited to English sources in the research process.

In addition, anyone who embarks on these academic ventures must be aware that some of the countries with whom we were to interact may not share similar attitudes regarding open inquiry, freedom of expression, or free access to information (Brodhead,

2011, para. 9). As an example, ethics regarding photo taking or note-taking may require approval by appropriate committees or governing bodies. It is, however, crucial as academics and researchers to maintain fundamental beliefs of integrity in the pursuit of knowledge for greater good. Thus, while embracing differences remains a challenge and may not be free of conflict, a precedent of open and honest research is set as an approach to take.

### **Restatement of the Research Questions**

Participating in a reciprocal learning programme and actively engaging in the process through journal writing allowed for me to bring a different global awareness into my own life. By exploring my experiences and reflecting on occurrences during the time the programme and then later, I have been able to traverse mental, physical, and geographic boundaries with the hope of extending my new understanding into the classroom. With experience and over time, I have refined and lived my personal philosophy as a teacher and I hope to be able to transport this into the classroom where students will feel welcomed in an atmosphere that embraces them. Through the continued notion of “refocusing the teacher lens,” from what I wanted to see to what was actually present, I endeavour to build relationships with my students, their families, and communities.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: MY FINDINGS**

Study abroad programmes help teacher candidates expand their global focus. Participation in these programmes acts as a transformative catalyst in teacher candidates' recognition of the importance of global education and its use in the classroom. I never expected that the reciprocal learning programme would change me in the way that it did. For whatever reason, I was compelled to keep a journal with the hope that, when returning to it, years later, I would find glimpses of inspiration, transformation, and discovery. Little did I know, the process of writing the journals would lead me right to a Master's paper much sooner than I initially thought.

### **Data Collection**

Coinciding with the Programme objectives as previously discussed, the benefits I personally realised through participating in the Teacher Education Reciprocal Learning Programme are numerous. For instance,

- Different techniques that I could apply within my own classroom were gained and by observing teaching in many classrooms, I witnessed new ways of working with students in my future classroom. At the same time, by observing different teaching styles in China, it also reinforced many of my own Canadian classroom practices.
- What was especially poignant was the lack of cultural inclusion while away. I discovered during my time in China that though the country has 56 ethnic groups with varying religions, beliefs, languages, and backgrounds, education is predominantly focussed on the Han majority. More than half of these ethnic groups were located in the Chongqing region where the reciprocal learning was

located (Xu, 2011, p. 2).

- Aligned with Freirean principles, I understood the need to treat students as individuals and understand their background before expecting them to share their unique values in a classroom context (Renner et al., 2010, p. 51)
- Being immersed in the Chinese education system provided me with a chance to do my own investigation. Under the auspices of programme organisers and facilitators, I was encouraged to make notes during observation and to reflect after. This was one of the most challenging parts of the Programme that demanded much introspection and sharing. Through this, I built independence, reflective practices, and knowledge of Chinese education.
- I built a level of camaraderie between other participants in the Programme by sharing observations, comparing and contrasting praxis in education in Canada and China, and opening doors for my continued professional growth.
- Through our interactions with faculty and staff, I developed a deeper level of understanding of Chinese culture. At the same time, I made friendships with other Canadians in the Programme, as well as Chinese teacher candidates, and I continue to foster those relationships to this day, creating a forum for continued professional and personal conversation.
- Because of language differences, I was forced to make use of other methods of communication with my Chinese counterparts. This was an opportunity to make use of other strategies for collaboration, much in the same way teachers must do with students who are categorised as ESL learners.

Short-term study abroad programmes are favourable as they are generally more



affordable than longer programmes, they appeal to students who might not be able or willing to commit to a semester or a year abroad, and they allow students in teacher education to study abroad without falling behind in their programme (Donnelly-Smith, 2009).

### **Overall Themes**

The Programme's success has been beneficial on many levels, not just for me personally. Dr. Shijing Xu, who initiated and continues to work for the prolongation of the programme, has helped administration, alumni, and upcoming cohorts to stay in contact. For instance, the development of a partnership was realised with ten local Windsor, Ontario schools in the Greater Essex County District School Board (GECDSB), the visiting Chinese teacher candidates' learning outcomes, and the impact that they brought to our Faculty and the schools where they observed, as well as to Canadian teacher candidates. Community partners in Windsor who were involved directly with the programme had positive responses: "We have benefited as much as they have benefited from us in our school. It is such a reciprocal learning experience for us all (Ms. Laforet, Principal of Dr. Taylor Public School)" (Xu, 2011, p.4) (referring to Chinese students). Not only did top administration cheer on the efforts of the programme, but also experienced field-work personnel in the Faculty of Education:

This entire experience has been a tremendous learning experience for all of us as well. Thank you for bringing these students and allowing us to become a part of their lives. They have left memories that will last a life time [*sic*] (Ms. Jo-Anne Grozell, Field Experience Office Manager). (Xu, 2011, p.4)

Chinese students were also encouraged to keep journals during their time in

Canada. In fact, this was a mandatory requirement during their participation in the programme. This is illustrated as follows:

Three months' visit is short; however, we have gained a lifelong and priceless experience in Windsor. We flew through oceans and mountains to embrace Canada and you. It is a worthy journey more than we can imagine. Our gratitude to you is beyond words. In return for your enduring endeavour, we will definitely spare no pains to apply what we have learnt here to practice in China. Actions speak louder than words. WE ARE READY! (Xu, 2011, p.4)

There are impediments to study abroad such as lack of flexibility in the curriculum and student inadequate language capacity (Internationalizing Canadian campuses, 2007). For example, the AUCC (2007) shows a decreasing number of institutions require students to take a language course. This is a real concern for me as I believe language is the bridge to connecting with people on so many levels. Financial issues continue to be a burden, as well, because although 44 per cent of responding institutions reported outside funding, the percentage of institutions that had received no such funding increased over the past decade, from 43 per cent in 2001 to 56 per cent in 2011 (CIGE, 2012, p. 6). Because of financial and event familial commitments, teacher candidates may decide to develop a more wide-ranging perspective by engaging in developmental opportunities offered in the "home" context.

The main idea is that each individual will have his or her own distinct experiences, shaping their perceptions of other cultures and peoples. Reciprocal learning and study abroad programmes are forums in which students can safely explore and reflect on these experiences. Through discussion and dialogue with their colleagues, they can

come to a better understanding of their values, opinions, and sensitivities and address them accordingly so they can better address their own students.

### **Summary**

This chapter attempted to navigate the successes of the programme where I was able to live out many of my personal beliefs and continue to refine my personal teaching philosophy. That includes a real, authentic, aware, informed and inclusive global classroom that can be better achieved through gained knowledge in reciprocal learning programmes.

Chapter Five will contain a summary, discussion, and conclusion sections that aspire to help readers of this paper explore their own beliefs, question the world around them, and reflect on how they can be not only better teachers, but better people.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS**

Students in elementary schools all over the province, no matter their cultural background, must develop critical academic skills, especially with the current social inequities and many unfriendly classroom environments. “All students need literacy, numeracy, technological, social, and political skills in order to be active participants in a democracy” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 160), but they also need to develop their global skills so that they may be inquisitive of everything else. Teachers engaged in culturally relevant pedagogy must be able to deconstruct, construct, and reconstruct the curriculum so as to achieve this goal (Ladson-Billings, 2008).

### **Summary**

Eisenberg (2006) suggests that advocating on behalf of students means not only changing attitudes and beliefs regarding cultural heterogeneity, but also that curriculum, standardised tests, and merit-driven assessments must be free of cultural standards and values. If making assessments impartial is impossible, then they do not provide an unbiased means of determining who gets access to privileged positions. According to Nisbett (2003) cultural biases can creep into language-based intelligence tests. In the United States for example, each state has its own rules and regulations regarding standardised tests. A question on the test may ask a student to write a paragraph about the relevance of NASA for Americans. Even if the child may have moderate knowledge of the English language, if they do not know the context (in this case, what NASA is), then they would not be able to write an informed response. Moreover, “even within a given culture, people of different [SES] have different exposure to words, and certainly across cultures and languages, comparisons become almost meaningless” (pp. 212-213). But

that is precisely how they are used. In addition to contextual issues of standardised tests, I recall a moment during my own practice teaching. A student of mine, Jimmy, had autism. Jimmy was aggressive, self-injurious, non-verbal, did not sit at his desk, and posed a high flight risk. He required a scribe and relied on picture charts to understand task direction. Jimmy was also very musically inclined, talented in playing the piano with the precision of someone who, on average, should be 5 years older. When Grade 3 testing came around, I was shocked to hear that Jimmy would be writing the test. When I asked “Why?”, the response from my associate teacher was “It is better for him to sit through the test and write, scoring very low, rather than us handing in an empty test” which could affect the school’s overall ranking. I could not believe that this child, who on a normal basis was given modification to help him learn, had to sit through a multiple-hour examination.

Individuals and their educational needs fluctuate from one person to the next and those needs must be fulfilled in their own capacities. Universal systems for education have benefits, but merit-driven programmes, as a mentioned example, should be reformed or amended to better assess and, more importantly, better suit the needs of every single student. When talking about wide-scale assessment, modifications must be made on a case-by-case basis by first understanding the needs of the child and then by understanding what makes them tick. For instance, if using differentiated instruction to coincide with a student’s developmental continuum (e.g., language or literacy development), then why are standardised tests not created with cultural differences in mind? Another option is discarding this kind of testing completely.

In order to address these issues, by using the lens of global educator,

communication between all individuals (including school administration, parents, teachers, and students) and groups in society helps to clarify misconceptions and to acquire the assistance in sustaining key beliefs of both home and school. What responsibility, if any, does global education have to a social history that predates a Eurocentric patriarchy if it is now meant to serve a more widespread educational and cultural vision? According to Ontario's (1993) policy, *Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards: Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation*,

the school system has been and continues to be mainly European in perspective.

The prevalence of one cultural tradition limits students' opportunities to benefit from the contributions of people from a variety of backgrounds. (p. 5)

Out of all the Professional Development (PD) days in which I have participated, and staff meetings I have attended, none of them discussed issues of cultural tradition. While I would never argue against discussing emerging research on literacy, numeracy, bullying, and physical fitness, teachers often do not have the chance to challenge themselves in the company of their colleagues to discuss real issues within their schools that could be influenced by children's backgrounds. Often, teachers must rely on their own personal reflections because they do not have another forum to discuss these issues. My reflections honed in on questioning these theoretical underpinnings and philosophical foundations of what I know based on the environment in which I grew up and am surrounded. As mandated by the Ministry of Education, there are several documents that have been released, as well as the creation of policy, meant to address issues of diversity within classrooms: *Many Roots, Many Voices: Supporting English Language Learners in Every Classroom*, *Ontario's Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy*, and *Antiracism*

*and Ethnocultural Equity in School Boards Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation.* Fortunately, I can say that I was exposed to these documents immediately in my B.Ed. programme, but I can credit that partly to the fact that my professor had an affinity to further exploring issues of diversity. The benefit I found in these documents is not only ways in which to understand in what bell hooks (1994) refers to as the “whole person” but also how to communicate with parents, guardians, and cultural communities. Some of the effective strategies I found most beneficial in my own teaching included using picture dictionaries, puppets, and simple art supplies (Ministry of Education, 2005). Apart from classroom application, the Ontario documents also showed techniques on how to communicate with students’ families and communities. For example, the document encourages using multilingual communities as a resource: “Members of specific language communities may also be able to help find library materials in their own languages or work with students on dual-language projects...or help to welcome and support newcomer families” (p.45). However, these documents are often left to collect dust. They become useful only when teachers truly understand the content through direct contact and where suggestions made by the texts to help provide students with a more inclusive education is realised.

Many of these documents stemmed from the province’s Education Act (1990), which stipulates the duties of those involved in education under Chapter E.2, Revised Statutes of Ontario. Despite the responsibilities to students, they are often left out of the conversation and are often not consulted regarding contributions and development to policy making. Undoubtedly, policy has the possibility to become much more real and applicable to the lives of students if they were included in the process.

Progressing toward global education as a needed global framework is imperative (Renner et al., 2010). While engaging with frameworks, the last two centuries of human social and political development have been riddled with the implementation of frameworks but their effectiveness is often questioned.

### **Discussion**

This paper outlines the opportunities that study abroad programmes can present to teacher candidates in an effort to gain transculturative knowledge with the intention of applying it in a global education context within their own classroom. To live and work in today's global community, teachers need to develop the ability to respond and work together with students in delicate situations involving international cultural contexts, practices, beliefs, understandings, and communications (Coryell, 2011). One way to support this development in adult and higher education is to offer opportunities to study abroad. These experiences can present teacher candidates with opportunities to learn firsthand about global diversity and the interrelationships of issues across the world's population today (Coryell, 2011, p. 4).

The unfortunate thing is that despite positive role modeling in schools, more often than not, the curriculum categorises students as the same – “White, middle-class, natural-born citizens” (Ladson-Billings, 2005, p. 75). The curriculum is a cultural artifact and as such is not an ideologically neutral document. For example, the history curriculum reflects ethnocentric and sometimes xenophobic attitude and regularly minimizes the faults of the United States and some European nations (Ladson-Billings, 2008, p. 166). To extend this thought – curriculum needs to work to move away from only the teachings of the DWEM (‘Dead’, ‘White’, ‘European’, ‘Male’). John Searle (1993) cleverly writes



against the notion of DWEM in his philosophical paper *Is there a crisis in American higher education?* in which he seeks to factually argue the negativity surrounding DWEM in education, crediting their authority in literature and by doing so, he essentially disregards minorities .

It is not new information: Western civilization is historically oppressive. Domestically, its history is one of oppressing women, slaves, and serfs. Internationally, its history is one of colonialism and imperialism. It is no accident that the works in the Western tradition are by white males because the tradition is dominated by a cast consisting of white males. In this tradition white males are the group in power. While Searle bases his arguments in fact, there is no reason to believe that our school system must continue to prescribe to White ideals. Thus, it is not hard or uncommon to see some students struggling or finding themselves at odds with what their role is as a diverse student in a 'North American' classroom. In fact, many students that still maintain cultural and familial ties with countries abroad (e.g., El Salvador, Mexico, Ghana, India, China) will continue to have an even more difficult time trying to "fit in" with the national discourse.

Many study abroad advocates have also expressed concern in the disproportionality among participants across race, gender, and academic majors, despite repeated efforts to expand and equalise participation across these groups (Council on International Education Exchange, 1991; Lincoln Commission, 2005). With an estimated one in every six domestic jobs tied to international trade, Tarrant (2010) emphasises that many institutions of higher education in North America acknowledge that the future depends on a workforce sensitive toward and aware of global issues (p. 433). The current

number represents less than five per cent of all students enrolled in postsecondary education having an international experience before they graduate (Tarrant, 2010, p. 434). Inopportunately, there are potential barriers to participation in study abroad, including finances, lack of awareness, a perception that study abroad is not important, familial and social constraints, inflexible sequential curricular requirements in some degree programmes, and (for minority students) a fear of racism abroad (Salisbury et al., 2009).

Globalisation has profoundly changed the future for students. Whether in a small village community or at a new university campus, students need to become comfortable with a world that now stretches far beyond their home communities. Understanding the development of various frameworks and the contexts in which they were created, engaging students with effective critical pedagogy, and applying creative methods within classrooms all help to move nearer to global education.

### **Conclusion**

Teachers must embody empathy, effective care, and cultural awareness when combining students and global education. These approaches, through teachers' own educated worldviews and experiences, bring a more holistic and valuable teaching practice into the classroom and community by positively influencing their students. The mission of empowering students through global education, however, is not limited to teachers. The literature shows student life outside of the 'school,' extending into community and abroad. From personal experience, by developing a connection of home and school life, media, and politics, there is an understanding that a "greater world" beyond the individual does exist.

I have always thought of the classroom as a place of hope, but this can only truly exist when the conversation shared between teachers and students and, most importantly, among teachers themselves, is honest. Educational research gives teachers an opportunity to recapture the idea that honesty and humanity as their work is not merely about different data, labelling students as numbers, and observing case studies. It is also about what difference educators' work can make in the lives of real people. "The questions we pursue, the projects we choose, the agenda we champion have be about more than career advancement" (Ladson-Billings, 2009b, p. 137). If education research is going to matter, teachers have to make it matter in the lives of real people around real issues.

While the official curriculum may be defined by the prevailing national political agendas and sociocultural contexts, it may still contain spaces that might be used by critical pedagogues to promote a strong ideological agenda. By mapping out the manifestations of these spaces onto a framework of global education, educators may evaluate and enhance their programmes and practices with the hope of achieving a true critical pedagogy: the emancipation and transformation of students and schools towards a better society.

Teachers need to know much more about the practice of other successful teachers for students of varying cultures who have been, traditionally, poorly served by schools. Teachers need to have an opportunity to explore alternate research paradigms that include the voices of a global family, as well as parents and local community, in non-exploitative ways. Teachers' responsibility of educating extends well into the future, and, especially for students, teachers must imagine and make possible a hopeful future.

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## Appendix A

### Warm Welcome



The welcome banner greeting our delegation to Southwest University in Chongqing, China. I (middle) am accompanied by my two buddies in the Programme

## Appendix B

### Daily Physical Activity



DPA at a school for students with disabilities

## Appendix C

### Mathematics or Visual Art



Mathematics class for students with hearing impairments



## Appendix D

### Stairway Divide



Red is for going up stairs, yellow is for going down stairs

## Appendix E

### All Lined Up



Preparing to go outside for DPA

## Appendix F

### Ready for Exercise



Students lined up for DPA on the school's field

## Appendix G

### March of the Students



Students marching during their daily DPA



## Appendix H

### All in Attendance



Everyone filling the courtyard in their own designated spot for DPA. It is easy to spot when someone is missing (middle right)

## Appendix I

### Headcount



A classroom of 87 students

**Appendix J**

**National Pride**



The only classroom décor appearing on the back wall

## Appendix K

### All Smiles



Kindergartners dancing to help celebrate June 1 International Children's Day



## Appendix L

### Standing on Guard



The common site at Tiananmen Square includes a strong police presence at all times

## Appendix M

### New Friends



These students, along with others, would come to Canada as part of the Chinese cohort in Fall 2011

## Appendix N

### Deeper Meaning



Reflecting on my experiences at the end of the Programme